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ZNY SSSSS ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8257
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 3637
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001720

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2017

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR LOOKS AT SECURITY, POLICE, POPPY IN
NORTH

Classified By: Ambassador William Wood for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

11. (C) (SUMMARY) During a May 13 visit to Mazar-i-Sharif and meeting with Balkh Governor Atta, the Ambassador offered congratulations for a dramatic reduction in poppy production, announced a planned increase in assistance to the province, and urged more progress on combating local warlords. The Governor reported he had set aside acreage for investment by Dole Foods and assured the Ambassador Balkh would remain drug free. In meetings at Regional Command (RC) North and the Swedish-led PRT, the Ambassador discussed poppy, police reform, and security. Special Forces explained that the main areas of unrest correspond geographically to Pashtun "pockets," but most violence is caused by common criminality. Security incidents are on the rise in Balkh and Kunduz provinces. Regional power struggles between local power brokers keep authorities busy, giving insurgents a window to recruit. PRT leadership expressed confidence that most locals would support the removal of some lower-level power brokers; they are hopeful and expecting change to improve their lives. The future role of the police depends on the army's ability to perform, recruitment procedures, and training. Successfully eradicating the poppy in Balkh province has added to its profile as a model of success. END SUMMARY.

Balkh Province: Model of Success

12. (SBU) Governor Atta used his meeting with the Ambassador to outline a positive picture of the current situation in Balkh province. Security is relatively good, though there is some criminal activity, "like anywhere in the world." Rule of law exists. Imports and exports are up, as is income. The Ambassador congratulated Atta on his success and announced that the US intends to triple its assistance to the province. He added that Balkh is viewed as a model of success despite a legacy of drug production. The Ambassador told Atta the US would like to see more "normal" law enforcement capacity in the province and reduction in the number of local leaders who operate through violence and

threats. Atta assured the Ambassador that "there will be no more drugs or poppy in this province...opium sabotages the GOA." Atta announced he has designated 10,000 hectares of land to be available for agricultural investments by Dole CEO Murdoch. Atta predicted that "if Mr. Murdoch's words come true, it will be a revolution in the life of people here."

Pashtun "Pockets" Are Trouble Spots

¶3. (C) At the PRT Mazar-i-Sharif briefing, Swedish Intelligence Officer Anders Ohland highlighted that the trouble spots in their area of operations (AOR) correspond to the geographic "Pashtun pockets" where enclaves of ethnic Pashtuns live among the Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek-dominated northwest. He noted that most criminal activity in northwestern Faryab, Jowzan, Sar i Pul, and Balkh provinces is linked to the narcotics industry, adding that security incidents (in the Northwest specifically or the North generally) are probably less well-thought out and less well-timed than the PRT assumes. Whereas in the south it is clear that the Taliban are behind attacks, in the North it is difficult to pinpoint responsibility and motives. While the Taliban have not given up trying to gain local support in Balkh, they are less active than in Kunduz.

Security Incidents Increasing in Balkh and Kunduz

¶4. (S) PRT Mazar Deputy Commander LTC Pertti Pullinen (Finland) noted that security incidents had increased. His

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intelligence specialist characterized this as a sign of success because it demonstrated that ISAF forces are effectively pressuring "the bad guys," who are responding with an uptick in terrorist tactics. PRT Intelligence Officer Anders Ohland cited bad governance as one of the principal security threats in the northwest.

Would Locals Support Removal Of Power Brokers?

¶5. (C) The Ambassador and the PRT leadership discussed how local power brokers (LPBs) in the region might be engaged. PRT POLAD Ingrid Tersman highlighted that locals want positive change in their lives. She and the Ambassador agreed that LPBs fall into three categories: (1) those who have returned to society as village elders and are accepted by their local communities; (2) the "mega-LPBs" like Governor Atta and General Dostum who have carved out fiefdoms of power over which they have solid control; and (3) lower-level LPBs who are not accepted by their community.

¶6. (C) Tersman hypothesized that locals would support the removal of LPBs in category three because it would likely result in increased security without high risk. She noted the removal of Wali Mohammed and Amatullah Matullah, had improved the lives of locals in their communities. In the case of Wali Mohammed (and also of Mawlawi Islam), the lack of an heir apparent caused the power structure to fall apart. Deputy Commander Pullinen stressed that when LPBs are arrested they should be moved immediately to Kabul, where their chances of remaining incarcerated are much higher. On the whole, the population feels safer than it did a year ago.

Successful Police Recruitment a Challenge

¶7. (C) Intel officer Ohland noted that recruitment was vital to the success of the police. Recruits from outside the region could feasibly do conventional policing better (by

not getting swept up in local alliances that often lead to corrupt behavior) but would be less able to collect human intelligence and liaise with locals. Polad Tersman said that training and recruitment must take into account the high levels of illiteracy; if they cannot write, they can't be expected to write reports on investigations. She suggested that short, medium, and long-term training programs would be most appropriate and should be developed to take into consideration the literacy levels of police recruits.

Poppy Elimination Successful in Balkh

18. (U) At a meeting at the Poppy Elimination Program (PEP) office on the Governor's compound, PEP Advisor Martha Barbosa reported that poppy production was down at least 80 percent in Balkh province. This is a dramatic improvement over the anticipated increase of 15-20 percent in production. Last year, the province was "carpeted" with poppies. This year, while there may be some unsurveyed production in the remote mountains, less than half an acre has been identified in the flatlands. Barbosa credited the success to Governor Atta's active support for the anti-poppy campaign, including going out himself and eradicating for an entire day with a shovel. She also noted the PEP team's extensive public information campaign, which included knocking on doors and reaching out to the mosques, local sporting events, schools, and health centers. They directly contacted 8,000 individuals during the campaign. The result: last summer, a survey of farmers in 91 villages across 14 districts indicated that they intended to plant poppy. This year they did not plant.

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19. (U) Barbosa said the next challenge will be high addiction levels, especially among returnees from Iran and the ethnic Turkmen community in Jowzan and Faryab provinces. Children as young as five are addicted, as a result of their mothers blowing opium smoke into their faces to calm them down or licking their hands while they harvest resin from the poppy flowers. Doctors report they must travel to homes to provide care, as addicts are too embarrassed to come to the medical clinic to seek help.
WOOD